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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS,
INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF
APARTHEID IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL
AND OTHER DEPENDENT TERRITORIES AND COUNTRIES: REPORT OF THE
SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Written statement submitted by Pax Romana, a non-governmental
organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication,
which is circulated in accordance with the Economic and Social Council
resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[10 August 1992]

1. The information contained in this document comes from the Committee for
Vietnamese Disabled Ex-Servicemen.

2. On 30 April 1975, South Viet Nam was annexed by communist North Viet Nam,
which, since then, has subjected all Vietnamese territory to a totalitarian
police regime. Ex-servicemen in South Viet Nam are regarded as traitors who
owe blood money to the people. As a result, they are persecuted, sent
en masse either to re-education camps which are no more than disguised goulags
or to unhealthy regions to clear away areas the Government has pompously
called "new economic zones".

3. Disabled ex-servicemen in South Viet Nam are included among this category of people, yet their fate is more tragic. Their wheelchairs and artificial limbs have been confiscated and given to invalid ex-soldiers from the conquering army. They have been removed from hospitals to make way for the wounded from North Viet Nam. From one day to the next, the blind, the armless, the legless, the tetraplegics have been taken away from hospitals and vocational training centres. Worse still, their homes have been seized, and they have been sent to the new economic zones without a thought for their state of health. It does not matter whether they live or die! In the case of the disabled ex-servicemen from South Viet Nam, every day their human rights are trampled underfoot, more especially in regard to the following:

Violation of article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

4. Among the countless victims we shall mention only the most typical. The tetraplegics and persons with amputated upper or lower limbs, hospitalized at Vung Tau, approximately 110 km from Saigon, were brutally expelled from the hospital. Most of them died for lack of medical care; some of them survived thanks to their families and the charity of neighbours. This was the case with Mr. Phan Van Canh, c/o Mr. Truong Dinh Rot, 106/3, To 21, Pham Hong Thai Street, Dac Khu Vung Tau, in the province of Con Dao, South Viet Nam. Paralysed from the waist down and living in a wretched hovel for more than 17 years he had to lie out on a camp bed, unable to control the need to urinate and defecate. With care from an octogenarian mother who herself lived in destitution, he survived until 12 May 1992. A list of paralytics and amputees fills in this sorry picture. Some are reduced to begging; they include a person well known in Saigon, Mr. Son Quest, of mixed Cambodian-Vietnamese parentage, who had both legs amputated. He lives from hand to mouth close to a public rubbish dump. Another, Mr. Pham Choi, with one arm and both legs amputated up to the groin, lives at To 27, in the village of Tan Loi, district of Dong Phu, province of Song Be. Mr. Truong Dinh Rot, a paralytic, spoke eloquently of the sufferings of these poor paralytics and amputees, driven out of Vung Tau hospital.

5. The suffering of the blind is as great. Mr. Tan Den, c/o Mr. Phan Thoi, 3i Anton Street, P.7, in the district of Tan Binh, in Saigon, suffered severe burns and is, moreover, deaf and blind. He was left completely to his fate and survived only with the help of other cripples. Mr. Do Van Binh, a former Second Lieutenant, a Catholic and a Eurasian, became a refugee in France and lives at 167 La Croix Saint Sylvere, 95000 Cergy. He tells of the tortures he endured while he was at the Re-education Centre in Trang Lon, province of Tay Ninh, South Viet Nam. He suffered serious eye wounds in the last days of the war and was hospitalized at the military hospital in Cong-Hoa, province of Gia Dinh, South Viet Nam. Thrown out of the hospital shortly afterwards, he was then sent to the Re-education Centres, although his eyes were still protected by bandages and he walked with difficulty on crutches. Because he was a Eurasian and a Catholic he was put among the lepers, a term used for persons who were decadent and beyond recovery in the eyes of the regime. Despite his pitiful state, he was assigned to forced labour and inhuman and degrading work. Every day he had to go down into the latrines to collect the human excrement, which was used as fertilizer.

He then had to spread it on the ground used to grow vegetables. Every day large numbers of worms crawled over his body, went into his wounds and his eyes and fed on his pus and his blood.

Violation of articles 9, 13 and 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

6. Many severely disabled ex-servicemen are dispossessed, are taken away and are left to fend for themselves without the slightest social assistance or medical care in the new economic zones, along with their families, who were persecuted in the same way. There are many cases and they include 50 families of disabled ex-servicemen that have been exiled to the new economic zone in Dong Trang, province of Khanh Hoa, in Central Viet Nam. The most typical family is that of Mr. Nguyen Ro, at Thon 2, in the village of Dien Dong, province of Khanh Hoa, Central Viet Nam. He has only one leg. In order to subsist, along with his family, he works a stony piece of land with difficulty, aided by his wife and one of his children, who drags the plough. Only recently, following the upheavals in Eastern Europe, has the Administration loosened its grip.

Violation of articles 3, 20 and 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

7. Recently, in March 1990, a group of disabled ex-servicemen was able to contact compatriots abroad in order to set up, with their help, a programme to assist those who were still in Viet Nam and to come to the aid of the destitute and the wretched. They redistributed the assistance from abroad: money from collections, theatre or musical performances and fund-raising events. Their humanitarian work is frowned on by the Security service, which keeps a close watch on them and calls them into Bureau PA16 (the counter-espionage service) in Saigon. Like many others, the group's representative, Mr. Dinh Trung Thu, who lives at 87 bis Cao Thang Street, 3rd district, Saigon, has been subjected to endless trying questioning and to intimidation. In the end, he was forced to promise not to do any more in this type of work and he is now under police surveillance.

8. The bank account containing the sum of 17,000 francs sent from France at the beginning of 1992 has been blocked by government order, when thousands of tetraplegics, amputees, blind people and badly burned people are living wretchedly in great need of this money in order to carry on living. Mr. Phan Van Canh, mentioned above, would not have died from hunger and lack of medicine if a tiny part of this sum had been released. Meanwhile, other severely disabled ex-servicemen will inexorably suffer the same fate.

9. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the right to life. This article must be respected in the case of disabled ex-servicemen and of those whose life is threatened. It is difficult to understand why the Vietnamese Government, incapable of providing for the subsistence and well-being of the people it rules, constantly places obstacles in the way of any act of good will to help the unfortunate, the wretched, the rejected.

10. It is distressing to find that so many people are unaware of the existence of these disabled ex-servicemen in South Viet Nam who have been left to the mercy of the conquerors. Their rights have been trampled underfoot by the present Government for more than 17 years, without the world public feeling disturbed. It is time to bring this deplorable situation to an end so that our unfortunate compatriots can lead a life of human dignity and so that their rights are respected. This will be done through you.
